



RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

Growing Alaska Through Responsible Resource Development

January 22, 2010

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Senate Resources Committee
Alaska State Legislature, State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801

RE: HB 162-An Act to Establish the Southeast Alaska State Forest

Dear Senators McGuire and Wielechowski:

The Resource Development Council (RDC) is writing to support HB 162, the establishment of the Southeast Alaska State Forest.

RDC is a statewide, non-profit, membership-funded organization founded in 1975. The RDC membership is comprised of individuals and companies from Alaska's oil and gas, mining, timber, tourism, and fisheries industries, as well as Alaska Native corporations, local communities, organized labor, and industry support firms. RDC's purpose is to link these diverse interests together to encourage a strong, diversified private sector in Alaska and expand the state's economic base through the responsible development of our natural resources.

The bill would establish a new state forest in Southeast Alaska from state lands presently used for timber harvest. The Division of Forestry would be able to manage the state forest for a long-term supply of timber to local processors, and retain the land in state ownership for multiple use. The forest would be managed as part of the State Forest System and under the current Prince of Wales Island and Central Southeast area plans.

In Southeast Alaska, demand for state timber exceeds supply and local mills are dependent on a consistent supply to stay in business. The majority of the timber in Southeast Alaska is on federal land, but federal timber sales have declined sharply. Subsequently, the demand for state timber from local mills has increased significantly.

Much of the proposed forest was inherited from the U.S. Forest Service with young second-growth stands. There is broad support for shifting timber harvesting in Southeast Alaska from old growth to second growth stands. Establishment of the Southeast Alaska State Forest will help provide a sustainable timber supply to local mills and accelerate the harvest of second-growth timber. Actively managed second-growth stands will provide more timber volume per acre on shorter rotations.

The shift to second-growth harvesting can be accelerated and timber volume increased on state land by thinning these stands. However, thinning is a long-term investment and is only justified if the land will continue to be available for forest management. A legislatively designated State Forest would ensure that land would remain available for long-term forest management.

RDC encourages your committee to support HB 162. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this important legislation.

Sincerely,

RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL
For Alaska, Inc.

Carl Portman
Deputy Director